

Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 17,
November 2, 1962, 11:00 AM

The President referred to a newspaper story by Roland Evans which reported details of Khrushchev's private letter of October 26. The President said the White House had already issued a denial that the U.S. Government believed this letter was written by an agitated or an overwrought man. He directed that all copies of the letter be returned to the State Department. He added that apparently a copy of the letter had gone to an allied embassy in Washington. He reaffirmed an earlier instruction that the only sources of information on the Cuban situation are Mr. Bundy and Mr. Sorensen. He indicated his unhappiness with the amount of information which had been given to the press without authorization. He directed that all aerial reconnaissance information be kept out of the Top Secret CIA Bulletin until after he had seen it. He would then decide what circulation within the government was to be given the reconnaissance information. He restated his view that we must make information available to the press in our own way rather than have it leak out.

Director McCone then summarized the intelligence memorandum.

[REDACTED]

In conclusion, he reported on the current Soviet test series. [REDACTED] including one yesterday of an estimated 1.2 megaton, at an altitude of fifty nautical miles.

Under Secretary Ball reported on a dinner meeting held last night in New York between our officials and Mikoyan, Zorin and Kuznetsov. He said Mikoyan started with a very hard position, but modified this somewhat later in the evening. He repeatedly attempted to tie Castro's five points to the agreement between President Kennedy and Khrushchev. He proposed that there be a formal exchange of documents which would conclude the Cuban missile negotiations. We opposed such a proposal and suggested instead that there be a UN Security Council meeting which would be called to hear three unilateral declarations -- one by U Thant, another by the Soviets, and a third by the U.S.

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There was a discussion of some UN presence in the form of a peace commission. The Russians were ambiguous on the status of the SAM sites. One of the Russians said that the Cubans might agree to the dismantlement of the SAM sites in return for our promise to stop overflights. The IL-28 bomber issue was not pinned down in the conversations. The Russians said repeatedly that they could not force Castro to accept on-site inspection. There was no decision on how inspection will be carried out after the missiles have been withdrawn. Mikoyan did not ask us not to overfly, but he did admit that he could not get Castro to accept ground inspection.

Deputy Secretary Gilpatric urged that we insist upon UN inspection as promised by Khrushchev. He noted that KOMAR missiles have been given to the Cubans and recommended that we keep our quarantine until a satisfactory substitute was in place.

The President decided that in view of the unsatisfactory discussions with the Cubans and the Russians, he would cancel his planned press conference in order not to be obliged to reply to questions about what guarantees we have that Russian missiles had been withdrawn from Cuba. Under Secretary Ball read a six-point statement which he recommended the President issue in lieu of a press conference.

Secretary Rusk suggested that we not call attention to the IL-28 bombers at this point because we may want to retaliate against these planes if one of our reconnaissance planes is shot down.

The President directed that a statement be prepared for issuance by the White House or the State Department. It should include what the Russians have agreed to and what we have agreed to. He asked what had been discussed in New York about the quarantine and about our overflights. Deputy Secretary Gilpatric reported that UN officials have given up on a UN surveillance system because Castro won't accept it.

The President asked how we were going to check on Soviet missiles being withdrawn.

Secretary Rusk said we could ask the [REDACTED] in Cuba check on Soviet equipment there. and where it was being moved to in Cuba.

The President noted that inspection of incoming material could be achieved, but we must develop some way of inspecting outgoing Soviet missiles.

The President asked that instructions to McCloy be prepared which would lay down the line he is to follow for the next three days.

Secretary McNamara recommended that we continue limited but daily overflights. He asked authorization for two flights of two planes each to cover different areas than were photographed yesterday. Targets would include Cuban ports and the IL-28 airfield. He opposed high altitude flights until we are certain that the Soviets do control the SAM sites. In answer to a question, he said we could use a drone for overflights, but the Air Force was opposed because of the possible loss and compromise of the highly classified drone.

In answer to a question, Director McCone said it was conceivable but improbable that missiles fired from SAM sites in Cuba could reach the U.S.

The President authorized the release to the press of the pictures of the missile sites taken yesterday, but not the pictures of the IL-28 bombers. He agreed that the quarantine should be continued until a satisfactory substitute was found.

Secretary McNamara reported on the current shipping situation and recommended that our ships hail all Bloc ships crossing the quarantine line but board none of them. He said Admiral Dennison had asked permission to board a Soviet ship, but had been denied this authority. The President agreed that we should not now board Bloc ships.

The President again called attention to the necessity of inspecting Soviet ships leaving Cuba with Soviet missiles as cargo. This inspection must be carried out either by the International Red Cross or by the U.S.

The President then turned to a discussion of atomic testing. He asked that consideration be given to what we will say publicly when our current test series ends and what we should say about our plans for future tests. He asked whether we should announce that we were prepared to halt tests until there was a test ban agreement. He said he opposed any pledge to refrain from testing for an indefinite period.

In response to the President's question, Mr. Bundy stated that our scientists doubt that the "black box" method of detecting nuclear tests is promising. The President asked that he be provided an evaluation of these unmanned seismic stations as a means of monitoring an atomic test ban.

Acting USIA Director Wilson asked the President for guidance for USIA during the next few days. The President instructed that USIA emphasize that Castro was obstructing peace in the Caribbean by blocking UN inspection measures. For the time being, USIA should not use the theme that Castro is a Soviet stooge.

The President asked for a report on the fighting between the Indians and the Communist Chinese, along with an estimate of what we thought would develop in this area.

Bromley Smith